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## A DISCUSSION OF HIGH-SCHOOL FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

### GENERAL STATEMENT

At a special meeting of the Parents' Association of the University Elementary and High Schools (School of Education), April 13, 1905, it was voted to ask for a referendum vote on the question of sororities and fraternities in the University High School, to be sent as advice and recommendation to the faculty of the High School. It was voted also to ask two committees to prepare briefs of arguments for, and against the societies, to be handed to all who vote. It was further decided to ask for the vote of all parents of students in the High School, and the four upper grades of the Elementary School. This was done that all persons concerned might be fully provided with materials for a deliberate judgment, and that those whose children are soon to come into the school might help to decide what kind of school it shall be. All parents are urged to vote, since our action will be widely quoted and influential in the country, and will be a help or a hindrance in establishing the ideal school of the future.

To vote in the affirmative, put a cross in the square opposite the word YES; to vote in the negative, put a cross in the square opposite the word No.

Votes not signed by name in full, or not in the hands of the secretary by May 15, will not be counted.

Each parent (both father and mother) has one vote. Women will kindly sign husbands' names, as well as their own, to avoid confusion. Kindly give address, as well.

CAROLINE W. MONTGOMERY,  
*Secretary Parents' Association.*

Mrs. Frank Hugh Montgomery,  
5548 Woodlawn Ave., Chicago, Ill.  
May 7, 1905.

## BRIEF IN FAVOR OF FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

## STATEMENT

The question under consideration is whether or not fraternities and sororities shall be permitted among the students of the University High School upon the following conditions, to-wit:

No freshmen shall be admitted.

No student shall be admitted without the consent of his or her parents or guardian.

No fraternity houses shall be maintained.

Every fraternity shall have as a counselor a member of the faculty.

At a meeting of certain of the parents of the students and of members of the school faculty, it was deemed advisable to learn the views of the parents upon the proposition with the conditions as above set forth, as to whether or not they favored the continuation of said societies.

This argument is submitted with the firm belief, that a great majority of the parents will, without hesitancy, promptly return their votes in favor of the fraternities and sororities.

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ARGUMENT

## THE FACULTY SHOULD NOT INTERFERE

We respectfully call attention to the fact that from our viewpoint, the question is one for the parents of students who may be members of such societies, and not one for the faculty or the parents of scholars who are not members.

If we were dealing with a boarding school, it might, with some degree of wisdom, be contended that the faculty should decide the question, but here the faculty is not responsible for the conduct and associations of the students when without the school.

Any attempt by the faculty to dictate what shall be the social conduct of the student in his home-life, would certainly be an invasion of the rights of the parent to whom, and to whom only, is logically given the privilege of governing the student when not in school. It would be equally just were the faculty to dictate what church or Sunday school the scholars shall attend.

## CHARACTER OF MEMBERS

Good standing in their studies is necessary for the scholars to become eligible to membership in the societies, and any outward appearance of snobbishness is not only not sanctioned, but in most instances is quickly eradicated, greatly to the betterment of the individual.

## SOCIAL COMPANIONSHIP

Social quality, so essential to good morals and good citizenship, develops in youth. Consequently persons to each other congenial will drift together, and as soon as the faculties of order and self-control develop, such association is formulated in societies such as fraternities, sororities, clubs, lodges, and the like. Recreation so necessary to all is, by fraternities and sororities, afforded to the students by congenial companionship, directly under the advice of the faculty and directly under the influence of the home circle.

Therefore, all such friendly relationships and associations among the students should be encouraged in every possible manner, because it broadens the minds of the scholars, and teaches aspirations for leadership, which tends in after life to the elevation of womanhood and manhood.

## SCHOOL SPIRIT

Whatever arouses school spirit is beneficial to the school—the association of the students in fraternities and sororities leads to an interest in the welfare of each other, particularly in school spirit and school enthusiasm. Such companionship can only be congenial and successful in its purpose when voluntary, as democracy and equality cannot be forced.

In this age almost the entire social life of a school is furnished by the sororities and fraternities, and if a school be robbed of its social spirit, then indeed will it fail of advancement.

## THE SOCIETIES RIGHTFULLY EXIST

Fraternities and sororities undoubtedly, rightly exist, and there is no doubt that they will exist in fact, if not in name. Why should they not be permitted an open, rather than a secret, existence?

Is it possible for anyone to admit the rightful existence of any religious, political, or civic society, and then to honestly and truthfully deny the rightful existence of fraternities and sororities?

The argument that all students are not invited to membership in the societies is not pertinent—parents are not above their likes and dislikes, why then should students be criticised because they are similarly constituted?

It has been said that members of the societies receive most of the elective offices and honors in the school. This may be true, but it is equally true that there are many instances wherein non-members receive the honors in the literary field, debating organizations, and athletic positions, etc.

In the world at large the active and energetic individuals receive the rewards.

Congenial companionship, friendship, and loyal co-operation are of right matters of choice and never have been, and never can be, successfully forced upon a people or an individual. The free and untrammelled exercise of such right by the people in matters of this kind should not be invaded to the extent here sought to be exercised.

#### CONCLUSION

If a student stays too long or too late at fraternity meetings, it is not the fault of the society, but of the student personally, and likely is chargeable to his early training, or rather to the lack of same. So if a parent, by remaining at his club, neglects his family, would anyone say the fault was with the club rather than with the individual?

It must be recalled that a member of the faculty is to act as counselor to each fraternity; that no freshman shall be eligible to membership; that no pupil shall be admitted without the consent of his, or her parent, or guardian; and there shall be no fraternity houses, but that the meetings are to be held at the home of some member of the societies. Could the students be in attendance at a better place than the home of a fellow student? Surely the parents will not deny their sons and daughters social relationship under such good and favorable auspices.

In submitting this argument we request a vote on the proposition from every recipient hereof, because we believe our contention herein expressed will be upheld by an overwhelmingly large majority.

JOHN G. DRENNAN,  
ROBERT L. HENRY,  
CHARLES F. DAVIES,  
*Committee.*

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## OBJECTIONS TO SECRET SOCIETIES IN THE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL

### I. SOME FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES INVOLVED

1. They are not needed. Students live at home, under direct care of parents and teachers. They are mere imitations of college societies without their justification.

2. They are selfish, unsocial and exclusive, working for their members' welfare as against that of the community.

3. All secrecy among young people except the protection of private rights is dangerous, inevitably harboring evil. A reasonable chaperonage is necessary in developed societies. The young must learn to have their pleasures in the open neighborhood of those who care for them.

4. Educators work for the prolongation of the spirit of childhood and youth. Fraternities tend toward early sophistication, imitation of elders, worldly social success, manipulation of community politics and experimentation in vice.

5. They are undemocratic, preventing the free formation of social groups. Students cannot leave them without accusations of dishonor, "disloyalty," even if a mistake has been made.

6. These societies cause a too early fixing of social choice.

7. High-school students should meet many people of varied character and experience and keep a broad social horizon. The secret societies are narrowing.

8. Secret societies likely to suggest, stimulate, and spread immorality. "Loyalty" and group protection against outsiders keep it secret. No self-cleansing principle in the system, and discipline uncommon except on outside pressure.

9. No such thing as adequate supervision; supervision is opposed to the very nature of the societies. It makes teachers spies, and injures their usefulness.

10. They create false notions of social life as consisting of (1) a few private friends, (2) "society" functions, (3) constant amusement, instead of co-operation in all school activities.

## II. HARMFUL TO THE MEMBERS THEMSELVES

1. High-school students are immature, unable to profit by social mistakes without interpretative help of home and school. Secret societies avoid this help by deliberate isolation from social life to the whole, and resistance to, natural community criticism.

2. The effects of "rushing" are bad, causing anxiety, excitement, confusion of interests, and waste of time.

3. The mystery surrounding secret societies and the social eminence supposedly conferred, give false estimates of their value to immature students.

4. They are a common cause of strife between rival fraternities, and between fraternities and "barbarians."

5. High-school fraternity members develop a narrow spirit of partisanship; and also partisan manipulation of school activities. Out of this rises the school "boss," whose pernicious activity hides too often behind the fair name of "school spirit."

6. They choose largely persons of wealth, social position, and striking personal gifts. This develops exclusiveness, snobbery, and neglect of many schoolmates.

7. The fraternity and sorority life forces a premature "society" life between boys and girls, filled with personal and social dangers.

8. The wide testimony is that these societies among young people tend to lower the general moral tone of members, that idling, expense, trivial conversation, indulgence, love of display, and the spread of gossip all accumulate in these protected eddies of school life.

9. The special moral evils of boys' fraternities are always possible, constantly likely, and actual and notorious enough to frighten serious parents. These evils are keeping late hours,

ribald language, obscene songs, smoking, drunkenness, gambling, and social vice.

### III. THE EVIL TO STUDENTS NOT MEMBERS

1. All students have equal rights to school advantages. The small secret, aggressive groups take an unfair share of these advantages, and make most of the students outsiders, "barbarians."

2. When secret societies are permitted there is a vast amount of social pain among non-members from feelings of accidental or organized neglect, and from natural timidity, and social inexperience.

3. This brings great pressure on students to join the societies, when many would prefer to remain out.

4. Special bitterness arises from the not uncommon experience of being "rushed" and then not elected.

### IV. SECRET SOCIETIES A MENACE TO THE SCHOOL

1. They are almost uniformly opposed by teachers—a sufficiently convincing argument alone.

2. They are commonly centers of rebellion against school regulations. Witness the well-authenticated report that the fraternities of our high school during the past winter have persisted in initiating members against the clearly announced rule of the faculty forbidding it.

3. They are opposed to a genuine "school spirit."

4. Though self-appointed, they assume to take charge of student activities, they tend to monopolize them, to interfere with free initiative of other students, and with proposals from the faculty.

5. They tend to destroy student interest in literary, scientific and art societies.

### V. IN RELATION TO PARENTS AND HOMES

1. Parents who have the best developed home life and show most interest in education almost uniformly oppose secret societies. These societies break up the perfect understanding and kindly co-operation between parents, children, and the school, which is the new ideal.



2. It forms the habit of leaving home to find society, amusement, and other than family standards of conduct.

#### VI. SOME MINOR CONSIDERATIONS

1. No private rights are involved in prohibition, since the societies are clearly school societies, originate there, prosper there, and have their evil influence there.

2. They are increasingly opposed by their own graduate members, and by college fraternities, and sorority members.

3. The ramifications of the societies through other schools is a confusion and danger to the ideals of the local school.

4. These arguments look toward the future, toward an ideal yet to be developed, and especially toward cautious parents whose children are yet to enter the school.

#### VII. OUR PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPING THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

1. That the school provide a Student Club House for boys and one for girls. That these houses be placed under the care of intelligent, well-bred persons, and be open to all students on equal terms.

2. That the school develop, when they do not now exist, many clubs of objective interests—literary, debating, art, music, collections, outing, athletic, dramatic, scientific—and furnish them meeting places.

3. That the school furnish a systematic series of school parties, varied to suit the age and social experience of many students. That these be chaperoned and managed by a combination of students, faculty, and parents.

4. That the school and the Parents' Association devise a large series of home parties, co-ordinated so as to prevent intemperance and neglect.

5. That all school honors and leadership be kept open, and administered by the faculty.

W. D. MACCLINTOCK,  
ARTHUR J. MASON,  
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*Committee.*